

Mold

Q. Where are mold spores found?

A. Mold spores are everywhere. Mold thrives in continuously wet conditions and can start to grow within 24 hours after a flood.

Q. What problems can mold spores cause?

A. Mold spores can cause allergy symptoms, headaches, bronchitis, asthma attacks, lung irritation and skin rashes. People with asthma or other pulmonary illnesses, compromised immune systems, infants and the elderly are more likely to develop mold-related illnesses.

Q. What can people do to control mold in and around the home, especially after a flood?

A. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) offers the following suggestions to control mold:

- Flooded homes should be thoroughly dried out, a process that may take several days or weeks.
- Wet carpet and padding should be removed and discarded.
- Porous materials – those that absorb water – such as sheetrock, some paneling, fiberglass insulation, cellulose insulation, mattresses, pillows, wallpaper and upholstered furniture should be discarded.
- Sheetrock and other porous wallboards should be removed to at least 12 inches above the water line. Check for wicking, the upward movement of moisture to higher levels.
- Clean wall studs where wallboard has been removed and allow them to dry completely.
- Floors, concrete or brick walls, countertops, plastic, glass and other non-porous materials should be washed with soap and water and then with a solution of one to two cups of bleach to a gallon of water and allowed to completely dry.
- Wear rubber gloves and eye protection when using bleach and make sure area is well ventilated. Don't mix bleach and ammonia. Consider using an N-95 rated dust mask if heavy concentrations of mold are already growing.
- Materials that cannot be effectively cleaned and dried should be placed in sealed plastic bags to prevent the spread of mold spores.
- People allergic to mold and people with asthma or other respiratory conditions should not do mold cleanup.

Q. What do people need to know about professional assistance with mold problems?

A. If large areas of mold growth are present, professional assistance with clean up may be needed. People and companies conducting inspections for mold or offering mold remediation services in Texas are required to be licensed by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Listings of currently licensed professionals and information about the regulation of mold assessment and remediation in Texas can be found online at:

www.dshs.state.tx.us/mold/.

Q. Where can people get more information?

A. More information about mold and cleaning up after floods can be found online at: www.epa.gov/mold/flood.